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substantial evidence of so improbable an occurrence as the breeding of the passenger pigeon in arid southwestern Arizona before they will be willing to accept these observations as a part of the history of a now practically extinct species. If specimens of the birds in question had been obtained and identified by competent authority, it would doubtless have saved burdening the literature of the wild pigeon with another questionable record, and one that may prove extremely difficult to eliminate.

J. A. ALLEN

#### ON THE TRANSFERENCE OF NAMES IN ZOOLOGY

As the preparation of an official list of *nomina conservanda* is now under consideration by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature it may not be out of place to call attention to a point that seems to me of prime importance in this connection, although it has received little notice from recent writers on nomenclatorial reform.

It is simply this—while the rejection and replacement of familiar names for well-known animals is, of course, an inconvenience to zoologists, it is a trivial matter in comparison with the grave possibility of confusion that arises when the names are used in an altered sense. In the former case we merely multiply synonyms, and, unfortunately, they are so numerous already that a few more hardly matter; in the latter case there is a real and serious danger of ambiguity. Thus, at present, a writer who mentions *Trichechus* may be referring either to the Walrus or the Manatee, *Simia* may mean either the Orang or the Chimpanzee, *Cynocephalus* may be either a “flying Lemur” or a Baboon, and so on through all the great groups of the animal kingdom till we come to *Holothuria* which may refer either to a sea-cucumber or to a Portuguese man-of-war. Cases like these seem to me to be on an entirely different plane, as regards practical importance, from those in which an old name is simply rejected; even if the shore-crab is to be called *Carcinides* for the future we have only the additional burden of remembering that it was once called *Carcinus*.

A striking (if somewhat exceptional) instance of the pitfalls that are in preparation for future students is found in the section on Crustacea in Bronn's *Thierreich* (Bd. V., Abth. ii.). On p. 1056 there is an allusion to “*Astacus*” and on the following page to “*Astacus* (= *Homarus*).” In the bound volume (unless the part-wrappers have been kept in place) there is nothing to show that a change of authorship intervened between these two pages and that, while the second “*Astacus*” refers to the lobster, the first indicates the crayfish.

If the International Commission could be persuaded to consider first those names that are threatened with *transference*, before proceeding to deal with those that are merely in danger of *replacement*, they would, I believe, secure the support and cooperation of many zoologists who have doubts as to the practicality of the schemes lately put forward.

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#### SCIENTIFIC BOOKS

*African Mimetic Butterflies*. By H. ELTRINGHAM. Oxford, Clarendon Press. 1910.

The remarkable resemblances often observed between insects of different genera, families or even orders, have long attracted the attention of naturalists. In some, probably many, cases the explanation may be found in parallel variation, or similar conditions of life. Such explanations do not go far into the heart of the matter, but they are satisfying to those who like to give a “reason” for everything. Bates, who was so familiar with the insect-fauna of the Amazons, hit upon a more special “reason” for resemblances observed by him. This was, in short, that certain species which were edible simulated others which were distasteful and so gained protection. The subject was taken up by Wallace and other naturalists, and soon a large body of evidence was available, especially in relation to butterflies. It was proved to be a fact that certain